

# The Auburn **CIRCLE**

spring 2002, vol. 28 no.2



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# Year In Review

Victory against Florida, defeat to Alabama, a snowy Samford, SGA elections and a flying Tiger at the Olympics; all in this special section of The Auburn Circle.

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Photo by Mike Cortez

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Cover photos contributed by the Southeastern Raptor Rehabilitation Center. The photographs were taken by Todd J. Van Enst and Mike Cortez.

Some stories may contain strong language and graphic content.

THE AUBURN  
**CIRCLE**

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### What is The Circle?

Auburn's General Interest Magazine

The Auburn Circle serves as a forum for the writers and artists within the university community. Its goal is to reach a diverse audience by providing a variety of fiction, non-fiction, poetry, art and photography.

The Circle is published twice a year and is financed by advertising and student activity fees.

### Submissions

Submissions featured in The Auburn Circle are accepted from alumni, faculty, staff and students of Auburn University. Submissions include artwork, fiction and non-fiction articles, poetry and photography. Editors review all submissions to select articles and artwork of appropriate size and content for printing. Reasonable care is taken to present the article or artwork in the form it was intended. Editors proof all submissions for accuracy before they are printed. Photos and artwork are chosen and placed with an article based on theme and design style at the discretion of the editors.

Auburn University is not responsible for determining the original authorship or ownership of any submission. Persons presenting submissions for publication must sign a form stating the work submitted is their original work. Auburn University, its Board of Trustee, Faculty and Staff are not responsible for any liability, including but not limited to, authorship, ownership, etc., of any submission published in The Auburn Circle.

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I truly believe in the saying, "Ignorance is bliss." I entered this job as most editors probably do, without the faintest idea of how I was ever going to pull it off. I had no idea what was in store for me. In my mind I had fooled everyone into thinking that I was actually qualified for the position and any minute they would figure out that I was just some fledgling journalism student that wrote a half-decent personal essay for the previous issue so what the hell, they needed someone for the job so why not me?

Well, after I calmed myself down, figured out where the light was in my office and how the heck to get my messages off the voicemail, I began to try to put out a magazine. I never realized what power it is to have control over an entire publication. And as amazing as that feeling is, it is also terrifying. The possibilities are endless; where do you even start?

Well, I started by following some good advice. I once had a professor who would write quotes on the chalkboard every week. I took one of her sayings and applied it to my situation and it helped me enormously. My version was, "Good designers borrow, great designers steal." Well, I didn't steal anything but I definitely took my cue from some of the greatest. Rolling Stone and Newsweek to name a few.

I feel that visually I have taken The Circle to a place that students can relate to and hopefully enjoy. Despite the turmoil The Circle has forged its way through this year, I am confident that at least a few more people than last year know what it is and hopefully next year a few more than that. I have loved every minute of it, even the minutes I was cursing myself for ever taking on such a task.

Now for the sentimental section of my address, you knew it would come. In four years of college I have seen four football seasons that included three victories against Georgia, two bowl games, an SEC championship game and a victory against Florida. I know the next Auburn football game I watch will not feel the same as actually being a student sitting in the student section of Jordan-Hare.

I have seen a liked University President ousted, new trustees protested and appointed and have come to understand all to well how college politics work. I have made and lost lifelong friends, fallen in and out of love twice, and will graduate with the greatest knowledge I could have ever hoped to gain from a college education, appreciation and gratitude for my parents.

None of the wonderful things I have experienced and accomplished would have ever been possible without their overwhelming love and support. Nothing I can say or do can even begin to repay them for all they have given me. I can only pray that I will contribute as much to the world and to the lives of others as they have. I hope they are as proud to call me their daughter, as I am to call them my parents. Thank you Mom and Dad for everything.

I wish the next editors the best of luck. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve this publication and Auburn University.

WAR EAGLE,



2001-2002 Editor, *The Auburn Circle*



# Home on the



# Plains



Story by Erin Simpson

# The Southeastern Raptor Rehabilitation Center is more than just a humble abode for Auburn's most beloved Olympian, Tiger. It houses a variety of birds such as Owls, Falcons, Hawks and of course, Eagles, bald and golden.

The first room you will come to after leaving the front office is the treatment room. X-rays of birds' wings hang on a chalkboard. Stainless steel accessories dot the room, which is filled with tables very similar to hospital workspaces. A chart on the wall lists the names of birds that are being treated, what they eat, what medicines they need and their location. Near the treatment area are a critical care ward and an isolation unit for seriously wounded animals. And outside, across a grassy field, are rooms that look like a set of numbered motel rooms or one-story apartments.

Behind the back of these rooms, you will find the birds. Owls. Falcons. Hawks. Eagles. Raptors. The bars across the top and back remind you of a jail cell, but if this is a jail, it's one where birds can have their own room plus plenty of food and entertainment. You pass behind the 23 birds housed here, looking at the differences in each species—from the tiny screech owl to the majestic, full-grown bald eagle.

Next, you walk into the first of huge conditioning areas for the birds that are releasable and will be set free from here into their natural habitat as soon as they are well enough. This one holds a red-tailed hawk and a great horned owl, two of the few different species that can be placed in the same area. One flies back and forth over you as you watch. These open-air buildings give the feel of no containment; the birds probably don't even know they are being kept.

The next one you visit is immense. It measures 180 feet long and 20 feet wide and houses a lone bald eagle. Though a young,

immature specimen, you can already see the beautiful, regal bird he will grow to be. As you step in closer, he leaps off his perch and comes screeching toward you. He will be released soon, to fly free and healthy where he wants to be. Already at his full-grown wingspan of seven feet, you can perfectly imagine him flying free over the mountains as he soars a mere 20 feet from your head. This is the Raptor Center.

The Southeastern Raptor Rehabilitation Center (SERRC) began in 1972 as part of an "environmental awakening" across the entire nation, says Director Joe Shelnutt. This year, the center's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, has been its best year in helping injured animals and in educating about wildlife conservation. From treating more birds every year, which has now reached more than 500, to presenting the center's most famous raptor and Auburn University's second most favorite animal, Tiger, at the 2002 Winter Olympics, Shelnutt believes this has been a perfect year. "It's great that Auburn was represented there and that Tiger was represented there," he says. "The Olympics was about us being a global community."

That is the guiding principle of the work of the Raptor Center. The goals of the center include education and conservation, research, medical treatment and breeding, according to its Web site. "The most important is education," Shelnutt says. "The type of education we do is for wildlife conservation. We use raptors for that." Raptors are some of the best birds to study for all of wildlife conservation because they are indicator species, which means their problems will give clues

about the health of the overall, global environment, he says.

Studying raptors such as Tiger is also beneficial since they occur all over the world. Part of the reason Tiger was chosen to be a part of the Olympics is because she is a golden eagle. "Part of the opening ceremony included a large cast of Native Americans, people of all five tribes of Utah together for the first time. They thought it would be good to have an eagle accompany them since eagles were so prominent in Native American history," Shelnutt says. "We used Tiger, a golden eagle, because they are found all over the world. It's a global symbol."

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service rescued Tiger, an 11-pound female golden eagle with a wingspan of 7.5 feet, 16 years ago from an illegal breeding operation in Missouri. She was sent to Auburn and quickly became the star of the university. Called Tiger and named War Eagle VI, she is the unofficial second mascot of Auburn, after Aubie the tiger.

There are at least four different stories of how a golden eagle came to symbolize Auburn, but no one knows which one is the truth. The oldest legend dates back to 1892 when a Civil War veteran is said to have brought an eagle to the first ever Georgia-Auburn game. The eagle broke free of his keeper and circled the field from above, in time to see Auburn win and hear the chants of "War Eagle" before it crashed to the ground and died.

The next fable recounts the tale of

Osage Indian Chief T.W. Wareagle and how Auburn fans, being so impressed with him during his visit to the university, adopted the battle cry "War Eagle" in his honor. Another tale tells of a military student at a pep rally who saw his eagle pin fall from his hat and, when another student asked what it was, said,

"It's a War Eagle."

The final story describes a 1914 football game against the Carlisle Indians, whose toughest player was called Bald Eagle. Auburn's quarterback supposedly called his name during the game, but spectators thought he was saying "War Eagle."

The presence of an actual eagle on campus began in 1932 when Auburn fans bought War Eagle II from a farmer for \$10. There is no actual record of a War Eagle



Photo by Joe Shelnutt

Above: SERRC's housing facilities  
Below: Stacey Hollenberger, an education biologist, helps Joe Shelnutt give "Choctaw", a male bald eagle a physical.



Photo by Erin Silberman

I. War Eagle II was later given to a traveling carnival, and in 1960 War Eagle III was donated to the university from a Talledega man. The eagle later broke free and was shot. The next year, the city of Birmingham gave Auburn War Eagle IV, who lived 15 years before dying of natural causes. War Eagle V came from Wyoming to Auburn in 1981 and lived until 1986, when she was replaced by Tiger on Oct. 8 of that year.

"Tiger is a known celebrity now," Shelnutt says. The eagle has flown over the heads of millions of people in Auburn's Jordan Hare Stadium, the Ladd-Peebles Stadium in Mobile and the Olympic Stadium, but otherwise is rarely seen by the public. "We have to be careful what we use her for. We have to use our guidelines," Shelnutt says. "We hold her in reserve for very high-profile events, and



Photo by Bryan Clarke

Tiger and Shelnutt traveled to Utah for the 2002 Olympic Games, over four billion viewers saw Tiger fly at the opening ceremonies

the training is continuous. You have to have downtime, rest periods, scheduled medical workups." The center also has to abide by the regulations set forth from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. "The reason for having birds of prey is for one purpose only—for wildlife conservation. That's in our license," says Shelnutt.

Many birds from the center are used for shows that highlight conservation efforts. Before SERRC moved into its new 35-acre facilities, it was housed in parts of the Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine, and many school groups were able to tour the center and see its birds. Right now, that's not possible. "The offices here are not built for public access, but to train people and raptors," Shelnutt says.

The new buildings are part of a four-phase construction that is now halfway com-

plete. The first phase includes the core medical areas, and the second phase consists of the rooms for the permanent residents and conditioning cages for the releasable birds. The third stage will be for public access. In this stage, the center hopes to add a site for daily raptor shows, a library, archives, offices, display areas, laboratory areas, lecture halls and an IMAX theatre. This stage will be open to the public and to private organizations, as well as to school groups, educators, veterinarians, biologists and state and federal wildlife agents, Shelnutt says. The fourth stage is mainly additions and expansions of the current facilities. The first two phases cost about \$1.2 million together, and the third and fourth stages planned will cost several more million dollars. Shelnutt says he hopes the center will be able to afford the third phase within five years, but that it is dependent mostly on donations.

The current semi-completed center is already unique in this country. SERRC treats more than 500 birds annually, mostly from the Southeastern United States, but it has also consulted in all 50 states, plus Canada, South America, South Africa, Australia, India and Eastern Europe. Shelnutt says there are only four other centers in America with facilities like Auburn's, but he says these centers focus more on individual raptor rehabilitation and less on total wildlife conservation, as SERRC does.

Nothing has helped showcase wildlife conservation this year as much as Tiger's regal presence at the Olympics Opening Ceremonies. "We want the most amount of exposure that we can get. The Olympics reached an audience of four billion people," Shelnutt says. He calls the Olympics "a once in a lifetime experience. "I'll never recapture that again, ever."

For more information on SERRC and Tiger visit their website at  
[www.vetmed.auburn.edu/raptor](http://www.vetmed.auburn.edu/raptor)



Persistence of Time

Photo by Mac Mirable

# **I SO (IN SEARCH OF)**

**By Milam Saxon**

**SUPREME DISCO MOMENT**  
**WANTED**  
**LUSTED AFTER**  
**WITH JUST THE RIGHT CLOTHES**  
**SELF-CONFIDENCE AND**  
**NATURAL BUZZ**  
**FUNKY LIGHTING**  
**SASSY BEAT, OF COURSE**  
**AND UNINHIBITED DANCING**  
**FUN, NOT NECESSARILY WITH TRUE LOVE**  
**JUST ANOTHER DANCE SOULMATE**  
**IN SEARCH OF DISCO BLISS**

# It Makes Sense

By Brantley Raley

Terri's '94 Volvo had been parked in the garage for about ten minutes now. She and Jess had gotten this place together in a residential suburb of Miami called Logan's Look just over a year ago, but to Jess it was already a home and their year together was a step on the way to a lifetime. Jess could hear the engine still running when he turned off the PBS show he had been watching on Van Gogh; he planned on covering Van Gogh next week in the art appreciation class he taught at Kennedy Community College. Jess thought he could make out the hum of talk radio, but wasn't sure if he was really hearing it or just knew instinctively what she would be listening to, because he was always so focused on her, too focused, Terri said.

When Jess was a kid, his mom would do the same thing. She would stay in the car for what seemed an eternity to finish some song or news story. Jess's father would always tell him to "leave his mom alone and let her have her time." "You're gonna' smother her," his father would warn. Jess checked his watch again, thirteen minutes. Jess felt that if it had not been for his father's lack of compassion he would not have needed his mom so desperately. Something always has to fill the void, Jess thought. He decided

when his watch said five forty nine he would go out, that would be thirty minutes.

Terri had arrived late today after being away in Orlando for a weekend visiting her sister, Leslie. Leslie had just left her husband Robert, who was a truck driver. It seemed that Leslie couldn't handle the long two-week stretches when Robert was on the road. She needed someone more constant. Jess had told Terri before she left that he understood what Leslie did. "You see, she had nothing to fill the hole left by Robert's being gone all the time. She could have a kid or something. But her leaving makes sense, to me anyway."

The day before Terri left for her sister's, she and Jess had a fight because Jess insisted on going with her, and Terri had threatened to make him move out. That night they made up and then made love, but Terri said that maybe just for a short while they should be apart. She said it would help to gain some perspective. She said that after two years a break would do them some good, that she needed distance. Jess had not agreed at all; he felt, with the way they worked together a separation would be detrimental. Now, sitting in front of the television, Jess heard what he thought was the car engine

revving slightly but knew it must be traffic on the street outside. Jess wished she would turn off the engine, thinking of the gas she was wasting.

Terri was twenty-six, two years older than Jess, and she had graduated college. She worked at a law firm and made good money. Sometimes they argued about money, but Jess really didn't have much ground to stand on so he usually gave up. Jess taught on a semi-regular basis and once a year he was able to show a few of his paintings in a small local show that was put on by one of his colleagues. Jess had been painting since he was thirteen. He became interested in art after his mother took him to a Van Gogh exhibit in Manhattan. Jess was fascinated by Van Gogh and had told Terri he felt somehow linked to the tortured artist. Terri appreciated Jess as talented but she said he lacked true initiative. Jess said he lacked inherent talent and that was something you couldn't produce. Jess said his strong point in painting as well as in life was passion and commitment. Jess waited and listened for the sound of the car door but heard only the muffled speech of the radio reporter.

It was late January and though Jess had not been outside he could tell

# 'He wanted to tell her he understood and he was sorry they fought and that all he wanted was for her to be happy.'

by the way the windows fogged up that it must be painfully cold out. The cold made him think of the first time he met Terri's parents. He had taken an overnight bus to Terri's parent's house in Raleigh, North Carolina to help her get her things. That's when her father, Jim, had given him the speech about Terri having great potential as a lawyer and how she didn't need some guy clinging onto her right now. Jess had convinced Terri that they should get a place of their own so she had gone to her parents to get the rest of her stuff; Jess came up two days later.

Apparently there had been some kind of huge argument. Everyone was tense and still angry when Jess came and then left with Terri the same night. They sat in Jess's car at a gas station down the road while Terri cried and Jess noted the way the windows had fogged up. Jess told her that night that all they needed in life was to be together and that seemed to cheer her up.

Terri had been in her car for almost twenty minutes now and Jess imagined her preparing her speech to ask him to stay. Jess would always tell her that he knew her better than she knew herself. Terri said that was ridiculous. Jess was sure she must have been feeling sorry for even mentioning a separation and hoping she had not

hurt him. Terri was like that sometimes. She would be angry as hell with him one minute, but give her a few hours and she would calm down and they could discuss things rationally. All it usually took was for Jess to console her and explain how things were between them. Jess loved how emotional Terri could be, even though it scared him a little sometimes. Jess thought about what he would say when she came in. He wanted to tell her he understood and he was sorry they fought and that all he wanted was for her to be happy.

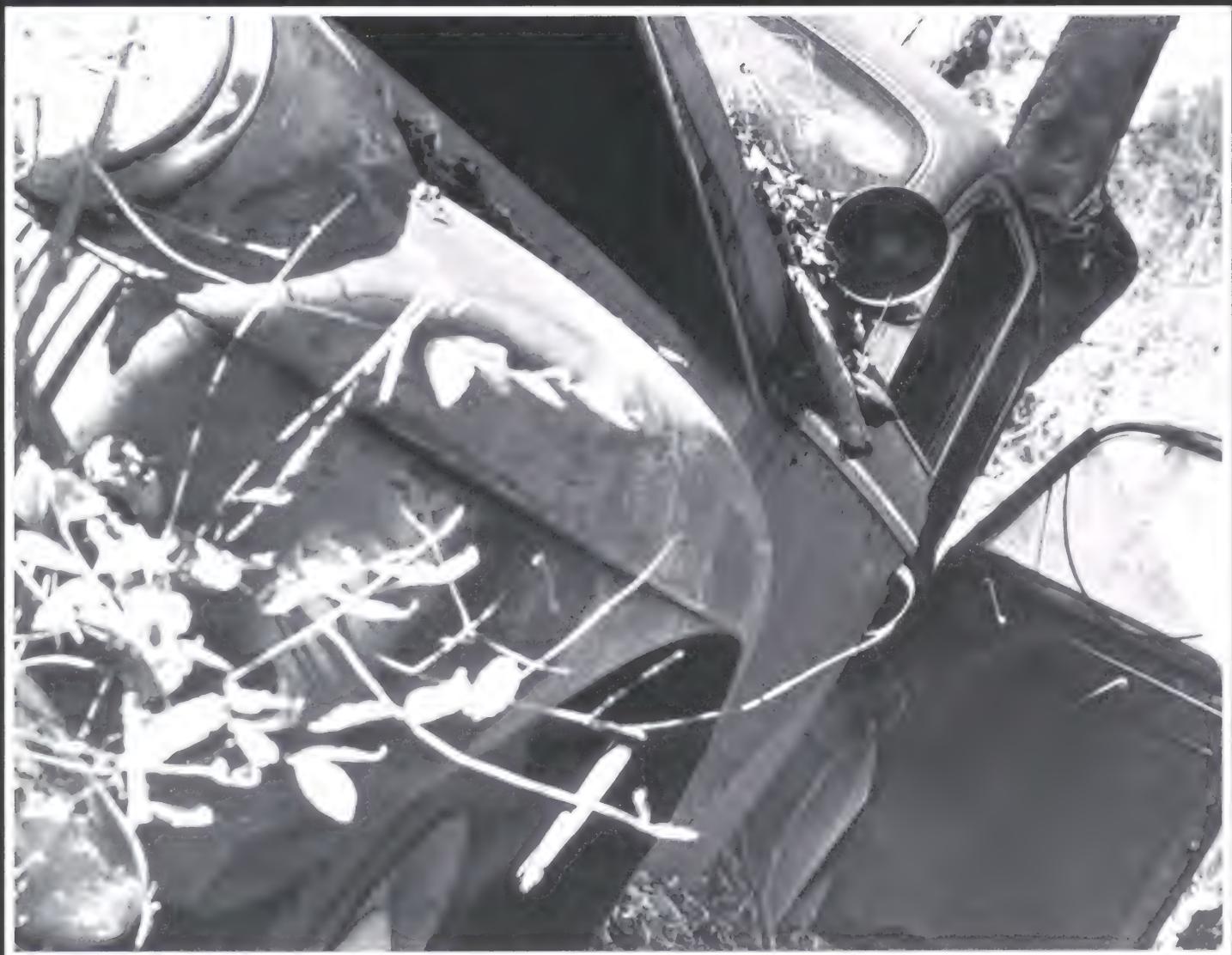
It was true. All Jess really wanted was for Terri to be content in her life. Jess told her once that when she was in a bad mood and he felt good he worried that he must be missing something that he should be upset about. That was the way their lives worked together. They were inexorably linked. Jess defined their relationship as a symbiotic union. He said we feed off each other. We need each other.

Jess wasn't sure why Terri had gotten so mad about him wanting to come with her, but he assumed she must have been feeling emotional because of her sister. Terri had screamed and told Jess to move out before but it had always been in the heat of the argument never in the calm moments afterward. Jess checked his watch; it was 5:46. He got up and went into the

kitchen, and felt scared but wasn't sure why. He began to practice his speech to Terri in his head. "The thing is Terri, I know our relationship is volatile, that's just the way some relationships work. But we're supposed to be together, I'm certain. That is just who we are, that's just how we work. Trust me." Jess wondered how many times he would have to explain this to Terri before she really understood. He decided to tell her the theory of how he and she fed off each other, and how if they didn't have each other they would figuratively, or no, literally die.

"Literally die," he said out loud. Once he had all of this arranged in his head he left the kitchen and walked toward the garage.

Jess paused momentarily in front of the heavy wood door leading to the garage. He glanced in the small mirror that hung beside the door and served as a key ring. He straightened his curly black hair and rubbed his hands down the length of his face. His hands seemed to tremble; he couldn't shake the fear. He noticed the small painting, one of his, hanging on the door, and was surprised at how unprofessional the piece looked to him. He smelled fumes from the exhaust. When he opened the door the smoke hit Jess in the face and it felt as if someone had wrapped a pillowcase tightly over his head. The smog burned his eyes. He could just make out the figure of Terri slumped forward in the car with her arm hanging out of the open window. Jess stumbled backward into the house, grabbing for the phone.



Vincent's Car

Photo by Brooke Bullman

# Trouble

By Heather K. Mickler

Just when you think life is going well...

Trouble comes buzzing around you like a gnat.

First, you feel it as it brushes by your ear.

You duck.

You scream.

You think it's gone.

And then it bites you in the ass.

---

# Walk On

By Lauren Glenn

It is six in the morning as Bridges Meyers walks down Passage Street, avoiding the cracks in the sidewalk and trying to decide whether to stop for breakfast. The cold is biting, and the sky is fading to that pale shade of early morning gray, the color gray, that always means rain. She stops at the door of her favorite deli, but walks on. She's not hungry anymore and suddenly feels ill. On a typical Saturday, Bridges would never wake up before noon, but she never fell asleep last night; she simply lay there, in her bed, dreamt with her eyes open and waited for morning to come.

And now that morning is finally here, it's windy and the street is slowly coming to life. The windows and doors of the trendy delis and coffee shops that line Passage Street are beginning to glow and fill with people. Bridges Meyers is four months into her senior year of college, only six months from graduation, and she is pregnant, but she does not know that yet.

Tomorrow, when she is forced to accept that her period may not be late at all, but instead on a leave of absence, she will walk down this same street, past the glittering store windows boasting trendy cloths and jewelry, past the designer coffee shops and bookstores an the delis where a sandwich and bottled water costs seven dollars, and instead of shopping. Daddy's credit card in hand, she will keep walking until she reaches the corner of Passage and Silent Falls Avenue, where she will turn left and walk on, until three blocks later the street ends at the open

doors of the Blessed Assurance Women's Clinic, where the pregnancy tests are free and the spiritual advice flows like water through sand. She will cry, and they will make her pray, and she will leave how her entire future could be affected by a simple phone call.

---

Bridges Meyers didn't believe in one-night stands. She never had.

But one night a month ago, after being offered a corporate internship at a prestigious Manhattan investment firm for the next summer, she decided to call a friend and celebrate. The next morning, after countless rum and cokes and a taxi ride she couldn't quite recall, she awoke next to Scott, a good friend toward whom she had never had intentions. But before she could sneak away, avoiding the impending, and inevitable awkward moment, he rolled over, flung his arm around her waist and mumbled sleepily "I love you."

She gasped and began to thank Jesus when she saw he was still asleep. Then slowly, patiently, she removed his arm from her waist, still bare, located her clothes and ran quickly, but quietly, out the door.

---

It has been one month since that night and one month since they last spoke. Tomorrow, Bridges will find out that she is pregnant. The next day, Scott will find out too.

---

'... Jesus, you found him ten years ago. You simply lost him one night in a haze of rum and coke that you can't quite remember...'

---

Bridges chose Weston University because it is a good school, but also because she loves Weston, Pennsylvania. It is a little like Greenwich Village, and a little like Boston, and a little like Astin, North Carolina, her hometown. She loves it because so many of the streets are cobblestone, and the buildings are brick, and there are trees with Christmas lights year-round. The shops are expensive, the people fashionable, and the bars and coffee shops plentiful. It is a town perfectly suited for college students, but not necessarily a college town. You can walk for blocks and never get tired, and she had wanted to live there since she was a little girl. Nothing, she thought, could ever go wrong in a place with cobblestone streets and Christmas lights.

---

You can see Blessed Assurance Women's Clinic at the intersection of Passage and Silent Falls, but Bridges doesn't notice because she's never needed to, and she hopes she never will. Scott is just a glimmer in the back of her mind, and right now what she is interested in is the silver watch in the display window of Silver Spoons, a jewelry store claiming to specialize in making jewelry out of antique silverware.

"Okay, it's not really silverware at all," said Bridges friend Nina, who had worked there for a month before she was fired for stealing a pair of earrings. "It's completely faux. They engrave."

Bridges had been eyeing the watch for nine weeks, but now, when in the display window she sees the reflection of a girl, stumbling on a grate as she crosses the street.

"You dumb bitch!" a young boy on a bicycle yells, and Bridges watches as he swerves to miss the girl, whose name is Anna.

Bridges glares at him. And wonders why the girl takes so long to stand up. Then, while the girl struggles for support, Bridges sees the girl named

Anna is pregnant, perhaps six or seven months. She starts to feel sorry for her, but then a pang of guilt hits her that says she has no right. It could just as easily be ... no, it couldn't.

She turns back to admire her watch, but seconds later, the boy is at her side, one hand in his pocket, the other on the handlebars of his dirty bicycle.

"You gonna buy somethin' in there?" he asks, and she thinks he might be staring at her purse.

"No," she says to the boy who's dressed entirely in black and wearing sunglasses, even though it's still early and not completely light outside. You should never tell a stranger, even a child, that you have money, especially when you can't see his hands.

"Why do you ask?"

"What you scared I'm going to rob you?" I already know you got money in there. The only reason girls carry purses is for money, makeup, and tampons."

"Excuse me?" she says, somewhat offended, although he's right, and that is what scares her the most, not because of the money in her purse, but because of the other things that are not in there, and should be. The things she should never have needed five days ago.

"Whatever," he says, and laughs to himself as he rides away. And she walks on.

---

She keeps walking down Passage until she stops at a newsstand for a paper and some cigarettes, because she's only five days late, and that happens to a lot of girls. All the time. Never mind that she doesn't even remember sleeping with him, let alone whether he used anything. She can't be pregnant — she's smoking a cigarette for God's sake, and everyone knows that pregnant girls don't smoke.

And now it's seven, one hour after she first started, one hour to kill before the stores open, and she sits alone at a table outside a coffee shop, ordering lattes and reading the Weston Daily Report. In one hour she will buy a watch for a date that she will cancel four hours later. She'll tell him it's because she isn't feeling well, and truly, she's not. But really she doesn't feel up to smiling and trying to be likeable. The only thing she wants to be right now is what she isn't and doesn't know that she is.

"Bridges, you're not pregnant," Nina had said two days earlier, and then offered the typical excuses that girls give each other when they realize they're late after an encounter with the opposite sex. "It's stress ... don't you always run a few days late? ... It happens to everyone ... you can't panic every time your biological clock skips a beat."

A few no. Five, yes.

Maybe if she had just stopped after the first rum and coke. Maybe if she had called Nina instead of Scott. Maybe if she had dressed a little differently, if she had chosen a different bar, if she had eaten more that day she wouldn't have gotten so drunk so fast.

The maybes flew through her head while she tried to avoid words like "morning after pill," "abortion," "trimester," and "single mother."

Why hadn't she just called Nina?

It is half past seven, and Bridges Meyers knows that something is wrong inside of her, the way the priest seems to know if you are lying, the way a teacher knows that you didn't really lose your assignment. In 24 hours she will wake up and take the long walk to Blessed Assurance, where an elderly lady with brown shoes and a flowered-print, polyester blouse will take her hand and make her pray, while she awaits the results of a test she fears she already knows the answer to.

---

"What are your options," the lady will ask, when the test comes back positive.

"I can't keep it," Bridges will say.

"Adoption?"

No ma'am," she will reply and she won't be able to look the lady in the eyes.

How do you tell a 60-year-old women that you're not interested on finding Jesus, you found him ten years ago. You simply lost him one night in a haze of rum and coke that you can't quite remember and wish more than anything that you could forget. How do you tell her that you didn't come here for her prayers? You came here because you heard the test was free, while it's okay to charge jewelry and shoes to your rich, southern daddy, the one thing he does not want to see is a bill for an unexplained doctor's visit,

the kind insurance doesn't always cover.

"You know that abortion is a sin ... " and the lady will trail off, because how do you tell a 22-year-old girl that life as she knows it is about to disappear because her only option doesn't quite fit into a clinic with Bibles on every table, and Focus on the Family Magazines in every room.

And when the lady is unable to change Bridges' mind, she will call for reinforcements, a girl about her age, who became pregnant at 18 and kept her baby, and now she's "just as happy as can be."

And Bridges will wonder what happened to this girl's dreams, and she will wonder if she ever actually dreamed of lecturing young women about the evils of abortion at a free clinic in a city that seemed to be entirely made of people who got everything they wanted, except her.

And finally, Bridges will start to cry, and make an appointment with a counselor that she will not honor, and she will go home tearstained and alone, and try to figure out how to tell Scott, who hasn't spoken to her since that night, that they were pregnant with a baby that she will not have.

---

It is ten o'clock Sunday morning.

The cold is biting, and as Bridges Meyers walks slowly down Silent Falls Avenue, turning right onto Passage Street, the wind hits her, strong and hard, and nearly blows her into the street.

She is four months into her senior year of college, six months from graduation, and she is pregnant.

The delis and coffee shops and store windows are beginning to come to life, and people walk quickly past her, annoyed because she walks so slowly. She reaches the cross walk and waits for the light to change, and when it finally does, she passes a lady, a mother who has stopped to peer inside her baby's stroller, making sure she's safe from the cold and wind.

And Bridges Meyers walks on.

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# Post-teen Infatuation

It happens like this,  
When all the words fly from thought

When all the structure snaps top  
to bottom and flops.

My head's heady rambling  
babbling extras all dropped.  
Confused ostinato,  
Running reason is stopped.

But I'm aware of my stare,  
Starved slow and lingering,  
It's hung on its hanging  
On your slow swinging gaze.  
My throat is choked,  
Blood throbbing and banging,  
And I know that I am staring,  
And it's passive obsessive,  
It's rough and slow hazing,  
I don't know what I'm saying.

And all that from sitting  
in the desk beside you  
It happens like that

Every time that I see you  
Every Tuesday and Thursday,  
Room A35  
3:30 to 4:45

By Matt Futral  
Sophomore/Business

# Beautiful Nothing

By Ashley Ardan

You started off as a persistent little sprout  
Pushing through the soil with unrelenting determination as you met the world  
for the first time

As time went on, you grew taller, stronger and gained beautiful petals  
The rest of the garden admired you and hoped to one day become like you if possible  
Suitors came and went because you were more attractive among the others

You let each date take a petal from you as a token of remembrance

You never knew if you'd see them again

Eventually you ran out of petals

This unexpected disaster left you, once again,  
standing out in the crowd

You were

naked

ugly

bare

Your petals were merely trampled on and forgotten

You are still strong, but now you stand alone

The wind whistles by as if it never knew you

You cannot regain what you have

lost

You were only known for your beauty



# BROTHERHOOD

BY SHELLY KENDRICK

My brother looked feverish in the back seat. We were on Battery Creek Highway headed away from our home in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and I kept sneaking glances at him in the rearview mirror. Sweat ran from his forehead into his fatigues, and I imagined, straight down into his shiny black boots. He wore those fatigues everywhere we went.

"Are you hot, Billy?" my mom asked from the driver's side.

"No ma'am," Billy said, as he stared out of the window. He is expecting it to rain. I know this because I secretly read his journal every night. He has kept a journal for almost a year. He has filled 355 pages. One page for every day he has been away from Vietnam. I remember it vividly. Billy wrote on April 12, 1968, "My home is so dry. Not like 'Nam. I always expect it to rain."

We are taking Billy to a friend's house. Really it's his doctor. Billy has no friends. People think he is scary. Billy scared me once, only once. Last month I was cleaning my shotgun in the living room. As I sat polishing the gun I kept the barrel pointed toward Billy. Billy watched every stroke I made out of the corner of his eye, and I watched Billy. When I cocked the gun Billy knocked me to the ground, and held the gun across my neck. His face was red as he pushed and pushed the dark metal into my skin. He finally stopped when he noticed the spreading stain on my

jeans and the smell of warm urine. I never pointed a gun at Billy again. That night I read in his journal on January 29, 1968, "Tonight I scared my thirteen-year-old brother...as well as myself." The ink was blurred as if the journal has been left out in the rain.

I always accompany him and mom on these trips. It takes thirty minutes to get to the doctor's house. We drop off Billy and then go out to eat.

Once I went into the doctor's house with my mom to pick up Billy. There were about 20 pictures on the wall filled with men dressed like Billy. Later in the car I asked my mom what POW stood for where Billy could hear. My mom squeezed my hand hard and Billy made a weird choking noise in the back seat. Billy always feels better after he visits the doctor. I think he gives him drugs. Billy has tried LSD. That means lysergic acid diethyl amide. I know. I looked it up. He must have taken it during a bad night, or something, because he wrote on May 9, 1968, "After a month in 'Nam I tried some LSD-it was a bad trip. The next day I woke up a mile away from my platoon, squatting in a tree."

I'm hungry. I can't wait to drop off Billy. Mom and I will probably go to the Golden Corral. I will get the 16-ounce steak so I can take some home. Billy can't eat meat because it makes him nauseated. The first night he was back my mother made roast beef. Billy tried to eat it because he was hungry, and

I could tell he wanted to please my mom. Every time the smell of the cooked meat hit his nose, he gagged, and had to leave the table. That night I read Billy's first journal entry. It said March 4, 1968, "I am finally home, and yet I am not." From that night on Billy has gotten a separate dinner of vegetables, noodles, and rice. He likes lots of rice.

The second night he was home my mom spooned rice in his plate and said, "How much Billy?" "Boo-koo," Billy said. We all looked at him strangely, and he smiled and said, "that means a lot." My mom rubbed his head, and I stared at my plate. I don't have to look at any rice tonight though. I'm getting steak.

I'm peeking at Billy in the rearview mirror again. We are nearing the doctor's house. His torrid face is staring at his boots. Even though they are old, he keeps them immaculate. Every day I see Billy polishing those boots. Sometimes when he thinks no one is watching I catch him smelling and touching the soles. It is almost as if he is searching for a clump of dirt from some muddy jungle. I think he fantasizes that he left a boot print in Vietnam. Billy was teased in Vietnam because of his boot size. Billy has small feet, and everyone knows what that means. He remembers the teasing fondly though. He wrote on June 20, 1968, "One night the boys and I were playing cards for boots. No one could fit into mine, and I became the butt of many jokes. However, when we compared other accessories I laughed last." This entry made me smile, because it reminded me of the old Billy. The last time I had seen the old Billy was the day he left for Vietnam. We were in the airport and as he walked away I yelled his name. Billy turned around smiling.

"I'll see you later, kid," he said. Billy never talked to anyone like that anymore. Sometimes I like to imagine that the old Billy sent us this journal over-

---

**'When I cocked the gun  
Billy knocked me to the  
ground, and held the gun  
across my neck.'**

---

seas, and this new Billy never existed. I voiced this opinion to my mom, and she slapped me in the face. It was the first time my mother ever hit me, and the last time I ever said this. The June entry continued with Billy musing about his private parts. He wrote, "There was a long period of time when none of us bared ourselves in front of each other. We were all swollen and in severe pain, because we had acquired edema down there." This confused me. Edema? Down where? I quickly looked up Edema, and the dictionary revealed that it was "an excessive accumulation of serious fluids in the tissues." The image kept me up late at night holding myself in bed.

Finally we pulled in at the doctor's house.

"I love you, Billy," my mom said. "We will be back in one hour."

We were backing out of the drive when I saw Billy's journal in the back seat. He is supposed to bring it to each meeting.

"Stop the car, mom. Billy left his journal," I said. I am never going to get to Golden Corral. As I ran up the driveway, I yelled Billy's name.

"You forgot your journal." I said.

He took it smiling and said, "Thanks, kid." In that instant a feeling went through me, and it was if something had shocked me, or if my brain were on fire. For a split second I saw Billy and I playing in the front yard. I was ten, and Billy had thrown me over his shoulder. We were both laughing. This memory seemed almost new, because it had been forgotten for so long. I stared at Billy, speechless, for a long time. He turned to go into the house, and I slowly walked back to the car.

The Golden Corral was hot and crowded when we arrived. I stared at the menu for a long time. When the waitress came to take our order my mom said, "I'll have a salad and he'll take a steak."

"No," I said, "I want the chicken and rice."

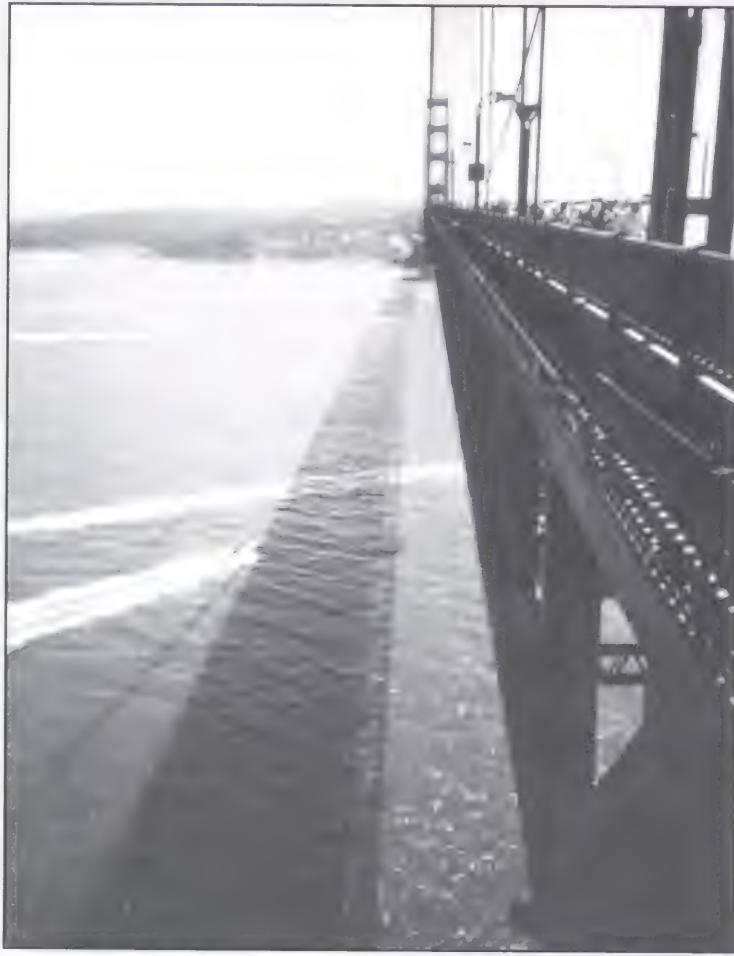
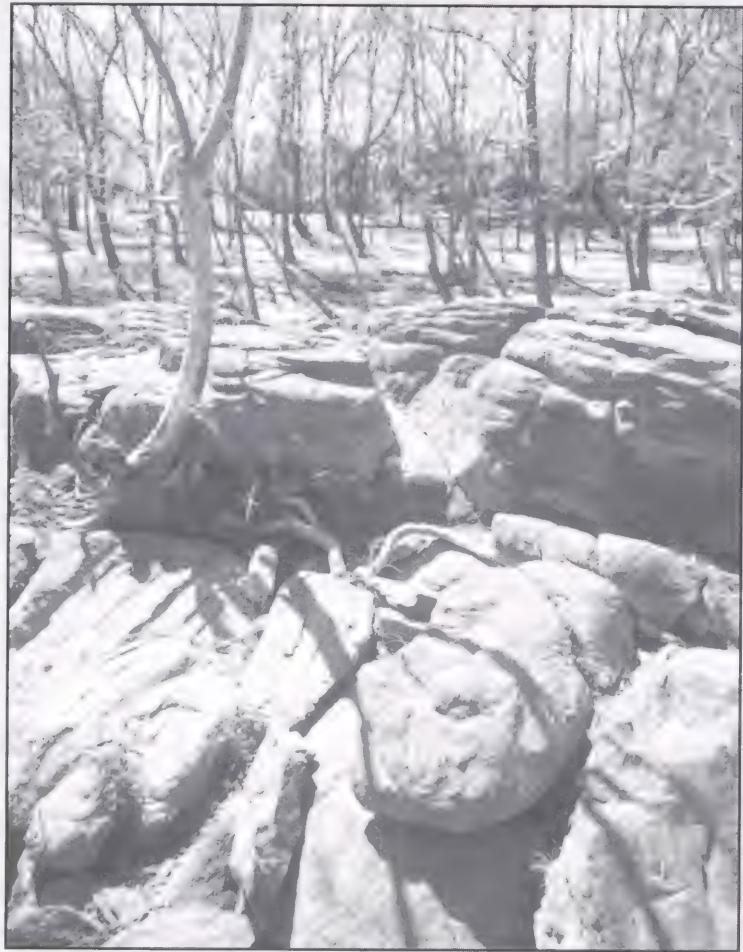
"The what?" my mom said. "Are you sure?" I nodded yes. When the waitress brought our food, my mom began eating her salad and watching me. As I took that first bite of baked chicken and white rice, the creamy sauce struck me first. It was so thick and rich. Although the bite was delicious I could not swallow, and I could not explain to my mom why I was crying.



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## Photos by Frank Dillard

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# Thesaurus

Dissipated droplets of dew-  
Falling on fresh flowers,  
Surrounded in sunshine's splendor,  
Captured by capricious clamor-  
In the palm of my hand.

Prolific people of persuasion-  
Bound by belligerent bonds,  
Caressed by cautious conversation-  
Implemented in icy irreverence.

Wandering wonderful words-  
Life of all literature lovers,  
Twisted, yet trusted tryst-  
I long to meet you in the morning.

By Sarah R. Creel

# The Love

By Shalonda J. Moore

Sitting  
Here  
Waiting  
For you  
My friends all say I'm just a fool  
You don't  
Love me  
Adore me  
Like you should  
But I just know, maybe one day you could  
You use me  
Abuse me  
treat me bad  
But all the while I'm thinking, you're the best I'm gonna have  
It seems  
As if  
I'm the last  
To discover  
I am not special  
You treat me like every  
other  
I know that I  
Deserve more than you  
But where can I find  
love  
No, not where but in  
who  
I've searched before  
Only to be rejected and ignored  
Yet there is one place  
I did not look  
I suddenly remember my little black book  
Searching the pages I am revealed to the one  
How could I have forgotten Him  
I must have been blinded by the sun  
Now as I  
Begin to see  
My head nods  
And I suddenly believe  
I have the love of God



Photo By Brooke Bullman



Photo by Lauren Nelson



Photo by Ben Rogers



## Free Spirit

The world holds me back,  
from expressing myself in full.  
Society seems to drown me,  
while my heart continues to pull.

The walls of sanity continue,  
to elude and trick my soul.  
To the everlasting moment,  
when I am losing all control.

Why must my past haunt me,  
viciously carrying out,  
a fate already chosen by,  
the "One" we cannot doubt.

Very soon I feel,  
the end is coming near.  
When all that's left inside me,  
will be dark and hateful fear.

So hold me back no more.  
I beg and plead of you.  
Doing so will only turn,  
my spirit a black and ugly hue.

By Tabatha Lendquvist Hardcastle

## The Friend?!

(The disillusion of the “University”)

Not jealous, just sadly too observant.

Memories traced along the mind, Not I!

Looking upon a stimulus arising thoughts, ideas, emotions, Not I!

When replacing your father’s place in the world,

you really will take over that place.

For his medium in life you are identically puzzling!

A fond remembrance bearing, birthing, regrets only felt in  
ancient years.

Destroying, not at first, but long down a traveled road, a love  
that dwindled to nothing.

The cause a past that contains nothing.

The cause a friend that meant too much.

The effect on a “love” lost, is a wanderer turned to words.

This “love” is lost in a passion of continual thought.

Infinite questions clouding mind.

Digging deeper into a grave, a coffin built of books,  
a shovel of poems, buried under a whirling alphabet.

Hold me in contempt, a love can turn to hate, when one  
can find the strength to save your life from a prophesized fate.

Breathe, breathe, lost again! Breathe, breathe, lost!

Is there no one left willing to guide and save?

Education has lost its meaning.

Trying to make everyone too alike.

Breathe, breathe, lost! Breathe, breathe, lost again!

Rid me of this life sucking FIEND, the FRIEND who steals relationships.

In the dark of night while catching up to dreams, the

Fiend takes the appearance of a clowning queen.

Here is where all seed are planted, leading my Jack,  
ascend the heavens.

Fill his void with translucent friendships

Silent and still, letting go, the hardest, but the better of foes.

And, I, graciously step down.

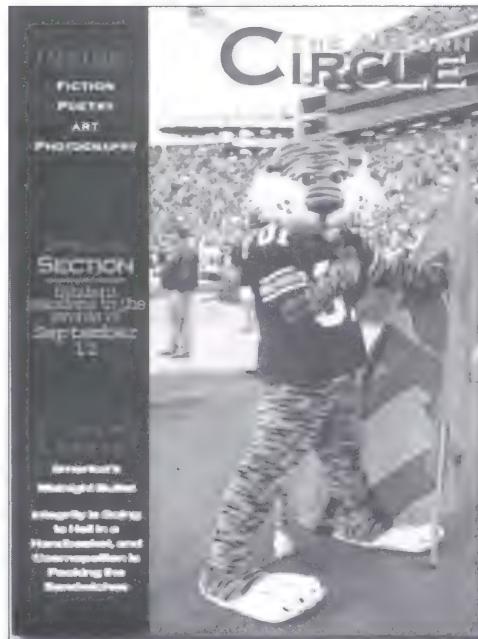


Photo by David Parker

By Tabatha Lendquvist Hardcastle

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# Year In Review

Just in case you missed any of the action in Auburn, here are a few reminders of what happened during the 2001-2002 school year.



## 2001 Auburn Football

	US	THEM
Ball State	30	0
Ole Miss	27	21
Syracuse	14	31
Vanderbilt	24	21
Mississippi St.	16	14
Florida	23	20
LA Tech.	48	41
Arkansas	17	42
Georgia	24	17
Alabama	7	31
LSU	14	27
UNC (BCS)	10	16

## AUBURN 23 FLORIDA 20

Auburn football has always come with its fair share of surprises. This year was no different. On October 13, 2001 the mighty University of Florida Gators fell prey to the Auburn Tigers.

The win marked the first time an unranked Auburn team had defeated the nation's top team since 1942.

Some said it was luck, some said it was a fluke, and some said it was one hell of a surprise, but Auburn fans simply said, "War Damn Eagle."

Despite the pouring rain Jordan-Hare Stadium stayed packed until the clock ran out and fans ran onto the field. Down came the field goal and down came the Gators ranking, making this one of Auburn's most memorable football games.



Photo by Mac Mirable

## Auburn 7 Alabama 31

With a victory against Florida and Georgia, Auburn was as ready as ever to meet Alabama on the field November 17, 2001.

The University of Alabama's Santonio Beard rushed for 199 yards and two touchdowns and Ahmaad Galloway ran for 127 yards.

Auburn University quarterback Daniel Cobb finished 9-of-17 for 139 yards and Jason Campbell came in during the fourth quarter and completed all seven of his

passes for 92 yards.

The Crimson Tide defeated 17th-ranked Auburn, 31-7, before a sellout crowd of 86,063 at Jordan-Hare Stadium.

The 24-point loss was Auburn's largest in the series since falling to Alabama, 48-21, in 1977.

The loss to Alabama ended the 12 game home winning streak for the Tigers.



Photo by David Parker

## Auburn and September 11th

The Auburn community was saddened when the first combat death in Afghanistan was reported to be an Auburn University graduate.

Johnny Michael Spann, a 1992 graduate, was killed in the line of duty while gathering information from Taliban prisoners for the CIA.

The 32-year-old left behind a wife, an infant son, and two young daughters.

In memory of the September 11th attacks, Auburn University will be constructing a memorial to honor those lost.

The memorial was designed by students from the College of Architecture, Design, and Construction. The teams were made up of one student representing the three disciplines in the college, architecture, building science and industrial design. A landscape architect was later added to the team.

The memorial is hoped to be finished within the year.



Heath Henderson  
2002-2003 SGA President



Steven Bobo  
2002-2003 SGA Vice President



Nick Wade  
2002-2003 SGA Treasurer



Katie Dombert  
2002-2003 Miss Auburn

## SGA Elections

Student Government elections were held on February 27 and 28 of 2002. After campaigns ended, the Auburn student body chose who they thought would serve them the best in the upcoming school year.

Heath Henderson, a junior in business, will serve as the 2002-2003 SGA President.

Steven Bobo, a junior in microbiology, will lead the senate as SGA vice president.

Nick Wade, a junior in accounting, will crunch numbers for SGA next year.

Katie Dombert, a junior in animal and dairy sciences, is the new Miss Auburn.

Also on the ballot this election was a referendum asking students if they would support a \$15 increase in student fees to improve student programming. Students voted in favor of the increase with 80.1 percent voting yes and only 19.9 percent voting against it.

Despite the chilling temperatures on the voting days, 20 percent of the student body turned out to vote. The incoming SGA officers were installed at the SGA banquet in early March.

Photos by: AKH

# Auburn's Flying Tiger

At the 2002 Winter Olympic games, over four billion viewers got to witness what Auburn University football fans see at every home game, Tiger VI soaring high in the air.

Tiger, an 11-pound golden eagle, flew during the opening ceremonies of the Salt Lake games on February 8, 2002. When not performing for Olympic sized audiences, Tiger lives at the Southeastern Raptor Rehabilitation Center in Auburn, Ala.



Photo by Mike Cortez

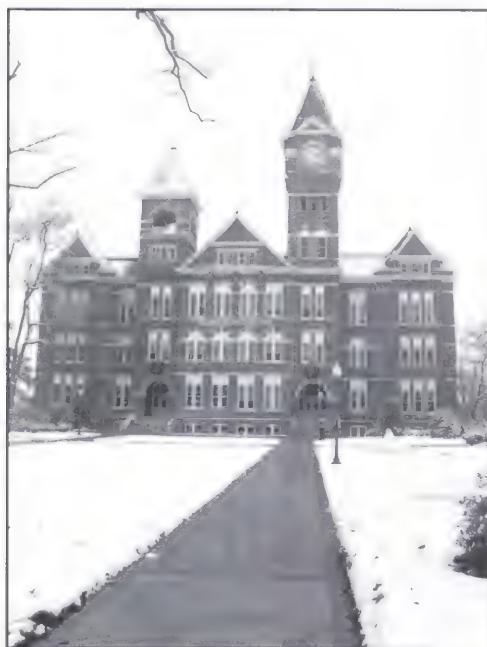


Photo by Jennifer Murphy

## Walking in Winter Auburnland

Auburn residents awoke to a winter wonderland over the Christmas Holidays this year. Everything from Samford Hall to Jordan-Hare was covered in a beautiful blanket of snow. Most students missed the flakes because they were still on vacation, but a few lucky ones witnessed the rare weather.



Ponte Di Rialto

Photos by Mac Mirable



Gondolier and Copanile

*The Auburn Circle*, Spring 2002 37

# What Happened

---

By Sarah Moreman

**3:11 P.M.** The bell had rung from inside Retman High School, and the students were outside, leaving, either walking or driving. A red Ford pick-up truck smashed into the side of a parked white VW Jetta.

**3:17 P.M.** Several students watched Cody Freight and Sheila Weber shouting at each other, beside the Ford and Jetta.

**3:18 P.M.** Sheila started to cry. Cody went to the red truck to get a piece of paper and a pen.

**3:21 P.M.** The paper with writing on it was in Sheila's hand. Cody was in the truck, driving away.

**3:32 P.M.** A cell phone call was made. The students and a teacher who had seen the truck hitting the white car told Sheila to wait for the police.

**3:37 P.M.** Gary Nehan stood on the porch of his *Circle G* ranch home, with his arms crossed and a scowl on his face. He saw at the gate the red truck with the front bumper dented, coming in.

**3:44 P.M.** The police asked the witnesses who stayed with Sheila what had happened.

**4:18 P.M.** Cody pulled down bags of feed from the storage shelves. In the stalls nearby, the horses nickered and stamped their hooves.

**4:20 P.M.** The police report was filed and Sheila, with one hand holding a twisted, damp kleenex and another a set of keys, was allowed to go home.

**4:32 P.M.** Mr. Weber placed a hand on the ruined side of the Jetta. Specks of red paint were embedded into the smashed door on the passenger's side. Mrs. Weber hugged Sheila in their kitchen.

**4:33 P.M.** Cody wiped his dusty hands off on his jeans. The trough was filled with feed.

**4:44 P.M.** The phone rang in the Freights' living room, where framed family pictures were on the walls, shelves, and side tables. The off-white couch was situated between the side tables.

**4:45 P.M.** Mrs. Freight picked up the receiver of the antique phone sitting on one of the tables, next to a chaise.

**4:58 P.M.** Gary called out from the entrance of the stables that Cody had a phone call.

**5:29 P.M.** Sheila was sitting on the light yellow down comforter covering her bed when her father walked in. The CD player played "Tears in Heaven" by Eric Clapton.

**5:43 P.M.** Mr. Weber and Sheila sat at the kitchen table, thinking about the next day, when they would make arrangements with the Freights' insurance company. Mrs. Freight, for her husband was not home yet, gave Mr. Weber the name of the insurance company. Sitting with them, Sheila's little brother, Tim, did not know what had happened earlier. Mrs. Weber was at the stove, preparing spaghetti and beans for dinner.

**9:23 P.M.** The moon was white and full. Cody sat in the back of his red pick-up, staring at the moon while chewing on a piece of hay.

**6:29 A.M.** Cody received a wake-up call from his father. A blank check had been placed on his cheek, letting him know that Mr. Freight would rather pay in full than have the insurance company help.

**7:02 A.M.** Cody called the Weber residence.

**7:04 A.M.** Mr. Weber, halfway dressed for work, picked up the receiver. His other hand was on the knot of his tie, already fixed.

**11:48 A.M.** Mr. Weber stood up when Cody, wearing a green plaid polo shirt and dress khaki pants, walked in the Lourdez Restaurant.

**1:09 P.M.** Mr. Weber and Cody parted ways outside the restaurant, with the check in Mr. Weber's hand.



Photo by Lauren Nelson

It's Over  
By Freddy Hudson

Dwelled alone in the woods out in the cold,  
Until the sun blossomed to reveal  
Flowers trickling down on my parade.  
Worrying and questioning,  
My savior came dressed in white.  
Thought I would be just fine  
While knowing I was paralyzed,  
Deceived into thinking you had it right.

Now that the snow has drifted farther away,  
Oblivion weights heavy on sudden hazy perception.  
Something was there, it had to be,  
But the feelings linger on the outside.  
If only this could be renewed,  
And run through with experience,  
I might make it a revolution.

## The World

The world has  
opened up to me  
The sky told the clouds to part.  
A dream again the other day  
And sat comfortably in my heart.

The rain still falls around me  
Yet, it lands on my arms and face  
I thought I'd never see the heavens again.  
I had fallen from God's grace.

But my voice is strong once more  
The pain all but disappeared.  
I speak of tomorrow with vigor  
The despair, like the storm, cleared.

I knew the sky was blue, the grass green;  
That was the only certainties to be seen.  
But now the air smells sweet, the breeze tender  
The summer brutally hot, the winter cold with spender.

I can feel again.  
The raindrops no longer pounce my soul.  
I love deeper.  
I have found an expansive whole.

By Sara Hyder

# *She's My Mother*

*By Jenny Britain*

She has guts. More guts than most women I know. Long after it had stopped making her happy, she fought for her marriage for the sake of her family.

For almost 15 years—day in and day out—she was the glue in relationships that had melted away years before. She had guts enough to survive it, and she had guts enough to end it, guts that enabled her to trust herself and the love of those close to her enough to take a step in an uncertain direction. She had guts enough to know that she and her daughters deserved more than what they had. They deserved to be happy, and to not live in fear, and she had the guts to say, “No more. Things have gotta change.” And she had guts enough to take a giant leap of faith and bring the three of them closer to happiness.

She's not all guts, though.

She's gentle. She makes me feel good when she calls me “sweetie” and when she hugs me longer than normal and wants to buy groceries for me and asks my opinion about her outfit or some paint for the walls (even though I know she has already made up her mind about what she likes and is simply wanting me to agree with her). I love it when she sees something sad on T.V.—especially those Hallmark movies—and she feels like weeping, but forces herself to hold it in, because she knows she won't be able to see the T.V. screen through her tears and besides, how silly would she be if she lost it because of a made-for-T.V.-movie? I love it that she loves her little marigolds at the end of the driveway and she enjoys getting dirty and sweaty if she can have pretty flowers smiling at her when she comes home from work each day. I love it that she came to all of my softball games in high school, even though I almost always sat the bench.

She would wash my uniforms and my socks and buy me 10-Ks and rush straight from work just to watch me sit the bench and to cheer on my team. I love it that she has always helped me move—into college four times and out of college four times. I love her because I have never had to move by myself, as many of my roommates and friends have had to do. I

love it that she loves me that much. I love it that she misses me when I am gone, and that I can hear it in her voice when we talk on the phone. I love it that she always asks me if she can fix me anything special for dinner, even though she knows I'll say, “Mom, I don't care. Whatever you want to fix is fine.” I love it that I can't remember if she's ever raised her voice at me—not because she never disciplined me—but because she is gentle and firm and strong and loving, all rolled up into a cute little package that is wrapped with one of the most beautiful smiles I've ever seen. I love it when we get tickled at the dinner table and laugh so much that neither one of us can speak or even breathe, but both of us have tears in our eyes, and we've been laughing so long that we can't remember

what was funny to begin with. I love the moments I've sat across from her and thought, “Mom's laughter is one of the most beautiful sounds I've ever heard.” I love it when she tries to be funny but just ends up sounding corny, and

Mandy and I get a kick out of her attempts. I love her brown eyes and her curly hair and her perfectly straight teeth and her fingernails and the scar from the burn on her shoulder and the fact that she always lets me borrow her slip or some pantyhose or her Bath-n-Body Works lotion. I love it that she makes way too many goodies for even a family of ten—much less the three of us—to eat at Christmas time. I love it that I know I can always bring friends home and she will always welcome them and make them smile and set out clean towels for them in the bathroom. I love it that she always woke me up for school in the morning by gently shaking my shoulder or softly saying my name.

I love it that she is my mother and that I feel loved and in turn can love others well. I love it that I want to raise children the way she raised me. I love it that I've made her proud, that maybe she considers the woman I've become to be her friend, her companion, and maybe a reward for the beautiful, selfless, generous, faithful, laughter-filled, loving life she has lived. She is my mom, and she is beautiful.

**'Mom's laughter is  
one of the most  
beautiful sounds I've  
ever heard.'**

# SERVING FOREIGN LANDS

By Jake Knight

Israel sounds dangerous to most Americans. African famines do not bother most Americans. But Auburn graduate Lee Vartanian sees these countries from a different perspective.

Six years ago the former Spoonful James drummer was a 20-year-old Auburn student trying to figure out what life was all about.

Little did he know that one trip to his home in Greenwood, S.C., would change his life forever.

While visiting with some of his friends he had not seen in a while, Vartanian noticed a change in one of them.

"I was surprised at how much he had changed, in a good way," said the blond haired, 6-foot-6-inch Vartanian.

His friend had discovered and become a believer in the Baha'i faith.

"(Baha'i) confirmed some of the thoughts that I was having about the world," Vartanian said in his slow, smooth manner.

The Baha'i faith is the second most widespread religion in the world. It is based on the teachings of Baha'u'llah who taught that mankind, humanity and religion are one.

Ecstatic about his discovery, Vartanian returned to Auburn and began to study the faith and talk to other Baha'is.

"I thought I'd uncovered one of the greatest secrets ever," he said.

Nine months after discovering the faith, Vartanian became a Baha'i.

The Baha'i faith encourages its youth to serve humanity as a volunteer for one year in its holy city of Haifa, Israel.

While this is not a requirement of the faith, Vartanian felt it was something he had to do.

One month after graduating from Auburn with

a bachelor's degree in social work, he was on a plane to Israel, where he lived for 19 months.

"It was such a diverse garden of people," Vartanian said of Haifa. "People from all over were just happy."

He says he has been lucky with every roommate he has ever had, and his roommate in Israel was no different.

Vartanian discovered that his Australian roommate was a drummer as well and loved the same type of music.

"I was an American redneck and he was an Australian redneck," Vartanian said.

During his stay in Israel, Vartanian delivered furniture to homes around Haifa in a big green van with the help of one other volunteer.

However, no delivery was simple. Each one required moving heavy furniture to the third and fourth floors of houses with no elevators.

"I don't want to guess how many times we went up and down the length of the Empire State Building," Vartanian said. "We were in tip-top shape."

While the work was difficult and the hours were long, Vartanian felt satisfaction from the service he was doing for others.

"It was good to work at a low level position," he said.

Difficulty in his work was not the only thing Vartanian had to struggle with.

"Israel traffic is horrible," he said. "I got used to and relished honking at people."

Cultural differences between the United States and Israel were another part of life Vartanian had to adjust to.

The Middle East lifestyle and climate were elements Vartanian appreciated the most. Windows were open constantly, children were let out of school

# 'In that town five miles away, the locals had what they called a theater. This was actually a television and videocassette recorder...'

with little or no supervision, and everyone seemed friendly to Vartanian.

"On those streets in Israel I felt more safe than anywhere in the world," he said.

After his 19 months were up in Israel, Vartanian left for his three month, personal mission trip to Africa.

Once there he began to realize how tired he was from working nonstop in Israel for one and a half years.

"It was the most fast-pace atmosphere I'd ever been in," Vartanian said.

Coming from a culture in Israel where there was power, indoor plumbing and everything worked, Vartanian began to feel overwhelmed. He did not know the native language, plumbing and power were luxuries, and he had to learn a new culture by trial and error.

When he arrived at Malawi in western Africa, the first stop on his trip, Vartanian was incredibly tired, hot, thirsty and hungry. He was almost angry that no food was offered to him.

"Dammit I was hungry," Vartanian said with excitement.

He would soon learn that people were in the fields working to get what little food they could get for themselves. They had no money, and the earth produced little food.

Meals for these people con-

sisted of tea and a little food for breakfast, no lunch and little supper.

Despite all of these obstacles, these people gathered enough money to provide Vartanian with lunch that day as well as the rest of his stay there.

"These people were now my friends," he said. "In the end I had to twist their arm, and twist it hard, to even repay just a little."

Every family he stayed with in every place he visited in Africa, he left with the feeling that he was part of their family.

"I'm not this rich white guy looking down on them; I'm their brother," Vartanian said. "I stayed in their homes, slept on their pads and used the bathroom in their holes."

"I traveled with Africans, among Africans to far off villages. I felt sorry for other travelers I would meet because they weren't experiencing what I was."

At one stop in western Africa, Vartanian stayed with a man and his son who was in his late teens. Being five miles from a town with electricity provided that teen-ager with a place to experience some modern luxuries.

While looking around this man's straw-roofed house Vartanian noticed pictures on the wall that looked as if someone was practicing karate.

Sitting around the fire that night Vartanian, still puzzled by

the pictures, noticed the boy looking at him. When he finally spoke, Vartanian was surprised by the boy's question.

"Do you know Van Dam?" the boy asked.

"Who?" Vartanian replied, a little shaken.

"Van Dam," the boy said.

"Van Dam," Vartanian said while making a motion like a karate chop.

"Is he still alive?" the boy asked.

"Far as I know," Vartanian replied, still confused.

"I love his movies," the boy said.

In that town five miles away, the locals had what they called a theater. This was actually a television and videocassette recorder with tapes for people to come and watch when they could.

The oddities and differences in culture were part of what kept Vartanian going through his trip through Africa.

However, the highlight of his trip was playing with the kids of each village. Africa is where Vartanian decided that early childhood development is where he belongs in society.

Now he is back in the United States working on a Ph.D. in urban services, with a concentration on education, at Old Dominion University. He has already completed his masters in early childhood education.

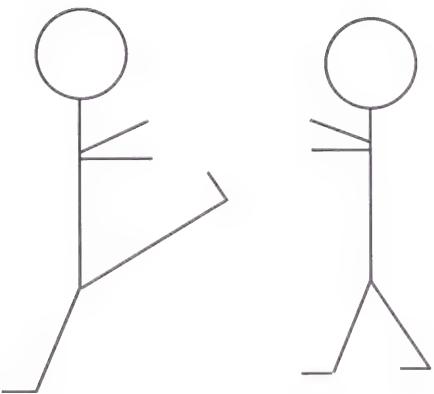
As much as he is enjoying home and all the luxuries, Vartanian will never forget the lessons he learned in that far-away land.

"I learned so much about mankind and common humanity that I would've been naive of."

# AN INTRODUCTION TO BRAZILIAN JIU JITSU

BY RUTILIO GARCIA-CARROLL

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"Get your left thumb under his collar. Good. Now slowly tighten your grip while leaning your weight forward. Don't strain yourself—let your weight do the work."

Unfortunately, these instructions were not intended for me. They were for the guy mounted on my chest. My feeble struggling did nothing to dislodge him; in fact, it only seemed to make things easier for him. By now my fate was sealed. Slowly but surely the choke was "sinking-in" and oxygen was becoming scarce. Stubbornly refusing to tap-out, I managed one final pathetic attempt at escape, and then everything went black. I awoke seconds later to find my opponent and the instructor standing over me. Such was my introduction to Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. I have been an addict ever since.

For those unfamiliar, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu is a martial art made famous in this country by Royce Gracie. In 1993, he dominated his opponents to win the first Ultimate Fighting Championship. As demonstrated in that event and many others afterward, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu is a methodical and intricate art, emphasizing technique over raw power. Strictly speaking, it contains very little punching or kicking,

opting instead to grapple with its opponents in a manner more akin to wrestling and judo.

Upon discovering that an academy existed in my area, I had to check it out. I arrived feeling a bit apprehensive, having no idea what to expect. The training session began with a 30-minute warm-up period of calisthenics. If you're anything like me, then you can imagine how tortuous this was. I had never done that many jumping jacks, push-ups, sit-ups and squats in my life. Thankfully, we were afterwards given a two-minute water break that barely allowed me time to catch my breath. Next, we were put into pairs and began drilling various wrestling maneuvers and judo throws. I never wrestled in high school, nor knew anything about judo, so this part was especially challenging. The other students, no doubt reminded by my bumbling of their own first days on the mat, were very helpful in assisting me. Unfortunately, just as I would begin to get the hang of one exercise, it would come time to begin another.

After approximately 20 minutes of this, we were given another brief water break and then finally got down to business. The class seated itself in a

# **‘Stubbornly refusing to tap-out, I managed one final pathetic attempt at escape, and then everything went black.’**

circle around the instructor, and the highest-ranking student began demonstrating, step-by-step, the techniques I had come to learn. Of course, this being my first day, virtually all of what was shown to me went right over my head. It was as if I were watching a movie in a foreign language without even the benefit of subtitles.

The first technique demonstrated was a basic armlock. This maneuver, like almost all others in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, is performed with both opponents on the ground. One opponent is lying on his back with his legs wrapped around the other, who is facing him. This is a defensive position known as “the guard.” From here, the defender on the bottom is able to control his or her opponent by restricting movement and limiting striking range. Of course, the guard is not limited to defense. A multitude of submissions are possible from the guard, the armlock being one of the most elementary of them.

An armlock is executed by firmly securing one of your opponent’s arms, say for instance his right arm. You would then swing your hips to the left while simulta-

neously bringing your left leg over his head and placing it under his chin. Then, keeping a firm grip on his arm at the wrist, simply begin straightening your back, pushing with your legs, and raising your hips. If you are doing this correctly, your opponent will soon be tapping-out or will risk having his arm broken. In case you’re scratching your head right now, it is often remarked that Brazilian Jiu Jitsu practitioners look like contortionists when rolling around on the mat. It is true that many of these moves are executed from rather strange-looking positions and may require a certain amount of flexibility to perform them, but it’s nothing that can’t be achieved with practice. Of course, I knew none of this at the time. When the armlock was demonstrated, all I saw was a mass of intertwined limbs, but I knew I was seeing something great.

After splitting into groups and practicing the techniques for a while, it was time to “roll,” as they say. The instructor paired me with a student who had been attending class for only a few months. No doubt this student was ecstatic that he finally had someone to roll with

who knew less than he did; in short, someone he would be able to beat. We squared off, and in no time, he shot in with a takedown and put me right on my back. Since I didn’t yet know how to defend from that position, he was on me right away. He began working for what I was later to learn is called a “clock-choke.” The instructor came over to talk him through it, and that is where my story began. You already know how it ends.

Perhaps this is making you wonder, “Why on earth would anyone want to do this?” There could be several reasons such as fitness, the sport of it or self-defense purposes. Personally, I do it for all three plus a fourth reason; I just love it. Admittedly, words like “arm lock” and “clock-choke” do not sound like pleasant things, but don’t let mere words deter you. Besides, the better you get, the less likely you are to end up in those predicaments. If there is a Brazilian Jiu Jitsu academy in your area, I strongly encourage you to at least go watch a class one day. I believe you will be surprised, if not in awe, of what you see. It is truly an art, not just a fighting system. Of course, you can always jump right in like I did, but it’s up to you.

**\*For information on AU’s very own Brazilian Jiu Jitsu/Judo club, visit [www.auburn.edu/jiujiitsu](http://www.auburn.edu/jiujiitsu)**

# Covered Windows

The shades are down.

My dreams are lost.

The window to my imagination

They tell me to create

But destroy my thoughts.

. . . shattered.

They will give me enough to hope,

Then take it all away.

I learn not to invest my hopes

In the vague dreams behind the  
glass.

All is lost, lost is all,

My everything is my nothing.

By Katherine Crona

# You Love

You cannot ask for love-

You cannot ask for more or less-

One knows whether or not the

Love is enough-

If more is needed we move on,

And if there is too much...

You and I both know one can never

Have too much love.

You cannot help but love,

Hair, eyes, lips, skin-

They bring the eyes in

To range of inner beauty, the most

Important attribute.

Sometimes we see inner beauty first-

Sometimes never at all- but it's there,

Waiting for one of the keenest vision.

You cannot help but be wrapped in love-

When she is lost in you,

And you in her, and one you are.

An innocence is created, for true love

Has no guilt, no anger, no malice-

Just good intentions, sweet kisses on lips,

And a guarantee of all this and more

While being forever lost in you.

You cannot help but spread your love,

To make others feel as you feel now-

In the hopes they will feel that way,

Or to let them know they can

When the time comes-

When the moment is right, kiss me-

Hold me tight-

I am all you love at this very moment

By Tim Kublinak

# HURRICANE

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By Rachel Moore

Sara Cross sat in her father's bedroom in Lime Beach Florida, on the last day of September, packing his collection of old records. It was three days before her thirtieth birthday.

Frank Sinatra. Tony Bennett. Ella Fitzgerald. Sara said these names aloud to herself as she placed each one in the cardboard box. They felt meaningless in her hands, like things at a stranger's garage sale. She wondered if her father had felt the same way twenty-five years earlier, packing Sara's mother's clothes in a black garbage bag after the funeral. Pink dress. Blue shirt. Red pants. She wondered if he'd felt the same weight of emptiness.

Outside, the sky had gone dark and the wind sounded like the beating wings of a giant bird. Hurricane Agnes was pummeling her way up from Bermuda to attack southeastern Florida. Sara had turned on the television to watch The Weather Channel before remembering that the cable had been turned off back in January after her father's funeral. So she had turned on a clock radio that blinked 12:00 in bright green. The storm wasn't supposed to hit until the next night and Sara would be back in Houston by then. Jeff, her husband, had stayed in Texas to watch Maggie, their ten month old daughter. She tried to picture them back at the house on Hacienda Street, but all she could see was Jeff reading the paper and Maggie asleep in her swing and the pictures wouldn't mesh.

Sara had hoped to finish packing early enough to go back inland to a hotel. Instead, she had spent most of the afternoon walking around the house, her hands in her pockets. The house smelled like tobacco, but Sara couldn't remember her father smoking. Drops of rain

began to hit the windows, fat and loud. Knowing she was stuck for the night, Sara went to the Shop-N-Save on Back Beach Road. Even over the squeaky wheels of her cart and the Muzac version of "Superstar" by The Carpenters, she could hear the wind outside and she imagine the palm trees that lined the front of the store lifting up their fronds like hands, pleading.

A blond woman passed Sara, her cart full of bottled water and cans of Hormel chili. Sara had worked at the Shop-N-Save when she was seventeen, the year Hurricane Enrique had hit Lime Beach and she remembered the same thing- tiny cans of chili, lima beans, tomato soup, niblet corn- little sand bags against fear.

Sara turned her buggy down the frozen food aisle. Right between the pizzas and the Hungry Man meals was a tall, dark haired man. A redhead girl, probably five or six, was in the bottom of the buggy where people put bags of dog food and ice. The man's name was James Radford and he had once kissed Sara in her parents' living room on the dark blue couch covered in white daisies.

It had been raining that day and Sara had been fifteen. He was a friend of her father's, although he had been about fifteen years younger, and he had come by that Wednesday to drop off a set of golf clubs, but it was only 3:30, so her father wasn't home. Mr. Radford had come in and sat with her on the couch and Sara had watched the rain fall outside as he had put his hand on her hair and told her how pretty her skirt was. It was red plaid with little black dogs on it and she had wished that she'd worn the black tights that went with it because his hand was on her leg, his fingers curling under her knee. Then he had kissed her,

his mouth open on hers. As though she were looking up from a deep hole, Sara could see her seventh grade teacher, Mrs. Dart, standing before all the girls in the class, telling them that if a boy ever touched them in "the Bad Way" they should scream.

But she couldn't scream because she couldn't breathe.

Her stomach began to ache as if something were punching her from the inside, something that was trying to surge out from her skin even as she sat so still. Her heart seemed to have moved from her chest to pound in her ears, her wrists, between her legs. He had moved his mouth to her ear and then to her neck and all Sara could think of was Mr. Radford drinking beer with her father and giving her pieces of gum with jokes on the wrapper. And some part of her realized that she could stop this, but she wasn't going to. That what he was doing

wasn't bad or good. It just was.

Then he had pulled back and Sara had started shaking. Her mouth stung and she could taste the cigars Mr. Radford smoked on her tongue. He had smiled and

hugged her, running his hand over her hair. Sara remembered the way her breath had sounded against his chest, loud and muffled at the same time, like putting your ear against a shell to hear the ocean. Then he had left and Sara had gone to her room and shut the door and changed into blue jeans. She had shoved the plaid skirt to the back of her closet.

Mr. Radford had never kissed her again, but when she went to college in Texas, he had sent her a ragged piece of notebook paper that said, "I'll be in every lonely song that you'll learn to play." Sara had kept that piece of paper for nearly two years until the day she had been driving through Austin and heard that same line in a country song on the radio. She pulled the note out of her purse and ripped it up while balancing the steering wheel on her knees. The bits of paper had looked like snow against the blue of the Texas sky.

That afternoon sat like a sharp-edged block in her chest, but by the time she met Jeff her senior year of college, the edges softened so there was no pain from the memory, only a dull weight. The last time she had thought of it had been seven years ago, four days after her wedding. She had left Jeff sleeping in the hotel bed and gone into the bathroom. She sat on the edge of the bathtub and traced the pattern on the tile floor with her bare toes. The floor was red with black diamonds.

She watched Mr. Radford now as he put two frozen pizzas in his cart. He moved forward. Then the little girl under the cart stuck her hand out and the wheel rolled over her chubby fingers. The child began to scream and the sound drowned out the storm. Sara turned and walked away. She pushed the empty cart to her car before realizing that she hadn't bought anything.

The rain was a deluge now and the wind was pushing her coat back from her body. She pictured the hurricane battering the water off the coast, forcing it up in huge waves. She imagined dark green claws of ocean pushing through the plate glass windows of the grocery store, through

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'... he had sent her a  
ragged piece of notebook  
paper that said, "I'll be in  
every lonely song that  
you'll learn to play.'

---

the bay window in her parent's living room.

Sara got into her car but didn't turn it on. She could hear drops of water falling from her clothes, her hair, and splashing on the leather seats. She tried to call Jeff on her cell phone, but there was no answer. The machine didn't pick up. She knew he was on the other line, but she let it ring anyway. She tried to picture Jeff in her mind again.

"I'll be in every lonely song that you'll learn to play."

Sara said it out loud and it sounded like a different language.

She thought of the note, imagining it still lying in pieces along Route 12.

She wished she could remember what his handwriting had looked like.



Photo by Robin Cooper

## Breaking

Lord help me, two hearts are breaking tonight.

These tears I cry are tears I've held too long inside.

Who's to blame, but me? I've allowed my heart to swell, oh how it can't take it anymore!

Why must it end like this?

Who would have thought this would be the fate of my most cherished relationship?

I let it happen, yes I did.

I was young and carried past torments.

I should have known it would end like this.

I should have known...

By Lauren Person

## Reborn Kisses

I sit around and hope I might,  
See you again for just one night,  
It's been a while since we've both seen  
each other,  
I know I'm your Man but i wanna be your lover  
I wanna kiss and caress your pretty brown skin  
Preparing for the time the real loving can begin  
But it's not gonna happen, at this moment in time.  
Remember this girl, you'll still be on my mind  
I'll still write you letters and the phone will still ring  
Nobody knows what, tomorrow will bring  
I won't give up on you, I'll just try again  
I may lose many battles but the war i WILL win  
So I'll sit here and wait, like a kid around  
Christmas  
Longing and waiting for our REBORN KISSES  
I love you Alice.....

By Akinlawon Tabari Frierson

# Pears and Yellow Butterflies

By Sarah Moreman

"And for the best at last! This award recognizes the most outstanding senior in areas of accomplishment, representation, dedication, and spirit. The Alabama Aldernon Memorial Award goes to Miss Faye Elizabeth Cress!"

Cheers and clapping erupted in the auditorium as somebody nudged me from the back. I stood up slowly, taking care not to fall over the person sitting in front of me; and as I eased between backs of metal chairs and knees, I acknowledged each pat on the back with a forced smile. The principal of Oakes High School, Dr. Grissant, remained at the podium where she had announced my name, waiting for me to join her to accept the plaque and an envelope with a check enclosed.

"We're proud of you, Faye," Dr. Grissant whispered as she handed the items to me. "Why don't you say some words to the student body?" Still smiling, I nodded and turned to stand behind the podium. But my smile was not for them, the ones who saw me as *Miss Everything*. The smile was for my leaving town after the awards ceremony

with my best friend, Leisel Townsend. My eyes scanned over the open-mouthed faces, which were hollering out my name in a chant. Today was the last Friday for me as a high school senior. I would be graduating on Tuesday night, the last Tuesday of May.

My gray-haired parents were sitting at the end of the second row on the left, a group of friends I usually hung out with, decked out in Bebe tops and designer pants and pearl stud earrings, were over at the right near the middle section, and Leisel, in her paint-splattered Abercrombie flare jeans and a baseball-style T-shirt, was in the back with the art students. Leisel did not receive awards or recognition of any kind. She was slouching in her seat with her pink flip-flops perched on the edge of the metal chair in front of her, laughing and talking with her seatmates.

An hour later, standing before the cherrywood dresser and its matching framed mirror, I held the letter from Vassar College. It started with, "Dear

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'... the yellow butterflies are my favorite. They remind me of the sun, and they are simple.'

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*Ms. Cress: We regret to inform..."* I had already read the letter twice. On the cherrywood shelves next to the dresser, there was the framed picture of my black-haired cousin, Vera, wearing a cap and gown with Vassar colors, holding up a diploma in one hand and hugging me with the other. It was a tradition for the women in my mother's family to attend Vassar.

I pulled out a small navy tote bag from under the quilt-covered bed, throwing in a pair of twice-worn jeans and a couple of shirts along with a toiletries bag. A horn blared outside. Outside the window, Leisel's used silver Toyota Camry was waiting in the driveway. In the gray-marbled kitchen, Mother was putting away groceries while talking with Daddy, who was leaning against the counter watching her. I paused in the doorway,

my fingers and bent elbow anchoring a brown leather purse to my side. My fingers felt the edge of the embossed envelope. I waved goodbye to my parents who had looked up. Later, the silver car pulled out of the driveway and down the road, passing magnolias rooted sporadically under the clover grass in our front yards, as we left our town of Oakes, Alabama.

"There used to be more yellow butterflies." Leisel said, "I miss them." I was darting my eyes back and forth, trying to freeze an image of trees in intervals as they whizzed by. Leisel's hand was outstretched, with her index finger pale at the tip from pressing against the windshield. The yellow butterflies fluttered away from the Camry. I leaned down to pick up a torn, grease-spotted folded Alabama

map from the compartment between our seats.

"So? There are other kinds of butterflies," I mumbled behind the crackling joke-of-a-map. The map was dirty and torn and had been made back in the eighties. I squinted at the smeared small printed names of the towns.

"True," Leisel said. "Still, the yellow butterflies are my favorite. They remind me of the sun, and they are simple."

"Simple?"

"Peaceful."

"Oh." I rummaged around inside my purse for a pen or marker. The embossed envelope was poking out from inside the purse, white against the purse's brown leather. My green Sharpie then was on the map, circling some names of towns.

*Selma, Montaigne, El-Gad, Ginn, Montgomery, Mobile, Pike Road, Bay Minette, Coxton, Fraizer...I could leave Oakes, couldn't I? And start over in any of these towns? And live an ordinary life? My jaws were tired from smiling all the time.*

"I painted yellow butterflies yesterday in my class." Leisel looked

at me, and with my head still bent over the map, I nodded. "Since I can't stop cars from whacking them, I paint to remember." I folded the map and put it back in the glove compartment and found a Tootsie Roll Pop, which I ate, even though I didn't like them. I didn't feel like talking, and it gave me a reason not to. I watched the curving highway weaving around the tail-end plateaus of the Appalachian Mountains, directing our car to Grayson, where Leisel had spent her summers. A painter and photographer, Aunt Cree was Leisel's mom's younger unmarried sister who came to Oakes frequently for family events. Aunt Cree would always greet me with a hug and an invitation to come down with Leisel for a weekend.

I leaned over the dashboard to look at the green road sign with white lettering looming larger as the Camry swallowed up asphalt. Frowning, I looked at Leisel.

"Are you sure we're going the right way?" I asked.

Leisel took a quick glance around her. "Maybe." She shrugged her shoulders.

"Aren't you going to turn around?"

"No hurry. Let's wait and see where this takes us." I put the Tootsie Roll stick in the ashtray overflowed with candy wrappers and bent straws from Hardee's where we usually had our breakfast on the days we skipped school.

The midmorning sun glowed through the windshield. The air conditioning was not working, yet we didn't roll down the windows. We didn't think about it, I guess. The Alabama pine and oak trees shadowed the sides of the curving highway.

A yellow butterfly appeared in front of the car and Leisel jerked on the brakes, and we veered past the painted white markings on asphalt and off the shoulder. Leisel righted the car again and then

looked at me, her slanted green eyes scared at first, then relieved, then gleamed.

"I think my heart stopped for a second," I said.

Leisel laughed. "But it started again, right?"

And then a green-painted wood sign welcomed us to Grayson, and a few moments later, Leisel maneuvered the Camry into a driveway leading towards a one-story house made of flagstones. Next to the flagstone driveway were two pear trees. Aunt Cree, barefooted, wearing denim overalls and a grey T-shirt waved from the front porch and stood up from the swing. Leisel climbed out from the Camry and walked up to the pear trees, where she plucked one off from a low branch, which I could even see from the car, were green and ripe. But I stayed behind for a second, looking down at the embossed envelope, which was half in/half out of my purse. My left hand reached to get it as my right hand pulled the door latch. My sandals met the flagstone as Leisel turned to face me, with a pear in her hand.

"This is good. Come and get one."

"Shouldn't we wash it first?"

# Azaleas

By Tabb Fondé'

Ethel got on the bus in Dallas. The seat next to mine was the only empty seat on the bus and so as she plopped down into it, I knew that I was destined to hear stories of children who had deserted her and beautiful grandchildren. Instead, Ethel quickly situated herself in the seat and took out a large stack of postcards, which she diligently filled out. Her only words to me were "Hi there!" to which I politely replied "hello" and then silently thanked God for not making her a talker.

Over the next few hours I alternately slept and stared out the window, watching the green landscape glide silently by. When I woke up from one of my naps, we were crossing the Louisiana state line. We stopped at the Welcome Center for the bus driver to stretch and I took full advantage of the stop.

After I had splashed my face with cold water and washed my hands, I went to the drink machines for a Coke. On my way back to the bus, I noticed the azaleas blooming in one of the gardens.

The fuchsia flowers covered the three-foot tall bushes that stood, immaculately trimmed, in flowerbeds strewn with new pine straw. The picturesque scene would have been perfect for an advertisement for Mobile.

The grass was perfectly cut and shown an amazing shade of green. The sky was clear and blue; the sunshine gave the flowers an iridescent glow.

Back on the bus, I climbed over Ethel and

her postcards and settled into my seat. I watched as the azaleas slowly disappeared from my window and thought of Mobile. It was like *deja vu*. It had been 15 years since I had left on a bus from Mobile to San Francisco and had watched the azaleas disappear from my life. It had been fifteen years since I had been back home.

I avoided the town like the plague. I hadn't even kept in touch with anyone there with the exception of my family. My friends from high school had all married and had children, or so my mother told me. Evelyn, Trish, and Jorden had all gotten married at about the same time; Mother had sent me the newspaper clippings from each wedding eight years ago. Their husbands were all successful businessmen who loved their wives. I, on the other hand, had been married and divorced. I worked all of the time and had no desire for a life at home with children like Trish had, or work part-time for my husband like Jorden. Evelyn was in real estate but that sounded boring to me too. Why I was even going to this reunion still baffled me. But Mother had been begging me for years to come home and so three weeks before the reunion I had called the Greyhound office and booked a seat on the bus.

Ethel was still writing on her postcards when I glanced her way again. One of the postcards had a picture of azaleas on the front.

"They're my favorite," I told her.

"What was that dear?" Ethel replied.

"Azaleas. They're my favorite. They remind me of my mother's garden. It was full of them."

"Yes. They are beautiful, aren't they?"

"What's your favorite?"

I asked her.

"Don't have one. I like them all."

A few moments passed while I sat, thinking, trying to decide why I liked azaleas so much. The truth was, I didn't really know, still don't.

"You look awfully serious," Ethel said.

"Just thinking. I can't seem to figure out why I like azaleas so much."

"Where are you from?"

"Mobile. You?"

"Biloxi. Almost the same."

"Yes ma'am," I said, "The thing is - I hate Mobile. So why would I like the one flower that reminds me of that place?"

I didn't think Ethel was really listening. I kept staring out the window and thinking about Mobile and the reunion.

"Why do you hate Mobile? It's a lovely place," Ethel said a moment later.

Surprised that she had been listening, I answered, "I don't know. I never liked it really."

"Is that where you're going? To Mobile?"

"Yes ma'am."

"Why go if you hate it so much?"

"For a reunion. My fifteenth. High school."

"It sounds like fun. My last reunion was forty years ago. Most of us are gone now."

"I'm sorry. I don't think it will be much fun though. Everyone else will have pictures of children and husbands. Me, I'll have business cards and a pager number."

"You're in business." It was a statement more than a question.

"Advertising."

"Do you ever get to meet famous people?"

"Sometimes but none recently. Besides, famous

people won't help make this reunion any more fun."

"Why don't you think it'll be fun?"

"I just don't. All of the people have lives they love, husbands who come home every night for dinner and don't keep their clothes at the office, children crowding the conversations. I don't have any of that."

"You don't like your life?"

"Actually, I love my job. It pays well and I get to be creative."

"Then what are you so worried about?"

"What will they

think? I'm the only one out of my class that is divorced and doesn't have children."

"Oh."

Ethel sounded so matter-of-fact about it. She went back to her postcards then and I stared out the window again. I watched the trees go by and the wild flowers on the median. I did love my job. Why did I feel so embarrassed then? I still dreaded the reunion and I didn't want to go home either.

Ethel flipped methodically through her postcards and chose one with a sunset scene on it. When she finished writing on it, she chose another and went on like that for a while. We were in New Orleans before I knew it and we stopped again. At the bus station, I put the "taken" card in my seat and got off the bus. Once again I washed my face and washed my hands and went back to the bus. Ethel was asleep so I was careful not to wake her as I climbed over her to my seat.

We left New Orleans a few minutes later and headed out on Interstate 10. I must have fallen asleep for a few minutes because we were about 20 miles from Mississippi when I noticed that the azaleas were showing up again.

Ethel had woken up and was busily writing postcards.

"My name is Lily, by the way."

"I'm Ethel," she told me, "did you have a nice nap?"

## 'I turned around and saw the postcard . . . I picked it up and turned it over. "Love your life like you love the azaleas.'

"Yes, thank you. Who are you writing to on all of those post cards?"

"Friends. Most of them are gone now, but I write anyway. Out of habit."

"Oh. That's good. I only write to my mother sometimes. We talk on the phone about once a week though."

"Are you going to see your mother this week?"

"Yes ma'am. I'm staying with them for the week. It's practical."

"I see."

"Do you like your life?" I asked her.

"No! I love my life," she said.

Ethel sounded so sure, so proud. We talked for a few minutes about her family and friends. Her life sounded so wonderful to me. She had lots of brothers and sisters and her children adored her. Her grandchildren were all grown but they still visited her when they could. I found myself envious of her. I wanted to love my life too.

"You make your life sound so wonderful even though so many of your friends are gone now," I said sadly.

"But I don't look at it as sad that they are gone. We had good times here and we'll have good times again when I join them. Your life doesn't sound so bad you know. I always wanted to be a professional woman. Have a job, get a paycheck and not be dependent on someone else to bring home all of the money."

"It's not as glamorous as you make it sound."

"I don't think it's glamorous. More like empowering."

"I guess it is in a way. I do what I want, when I want. I get to make my own rules, within reason, and I'm definitely not dependent on anyone else."

"But," I said.

"But what dear?"

"I was married once and it was nice knowing that someone would be home with me at night."

"You're still young. You can have that again. Not me. I'm old and most of the men my age are half dead."

I laughed at her expression. I'd never heard of anyone calling someone else "half dead." Looking back out the window I tried to find a sign telling

where we were. When I finally saw one I was upset to see that we were only 20 miles from Biloxi.

"Ethel, Mobile isn't such a bad place. It's very beautiful in the spring. When the azaleas bloom, it looks like a fairy garden all around. The flowers cover big bushes and look so pretty in the morning after it rains."

"It sounds perfect."

"Not perfect really, just pretty."

"So why don't you like Mobile then?"

"I don't know. There's so much to do. My family lives there and I never see them unless they come to San Francisco. We don't have azaleas like that in California either."

Our conversation trailed off and I stared out the window again. It was late in the afternoon and I could see my reflection in the glass. Behind the face that stared back at me were bushes of azaleas in full bloom. The fuchsia flowers framed my reflection; it looked like one of those scenes in a music video. I closed my eyes and thought about my life. It wasn't really so bad. Sure I had made mistakes and my life definitely wasn't perfect, but it wasn't horrible.

When I opened my eyes again Ethel was gone. We had pulled into the bus station and she had gotten off. I looked for her bag but it was gone too. The bus pulled out of the station a minute later and I stared out the window again thinking about Ethel. In the reflection, I noticed something on the seat behind me. I turned around and saw the postcard with the azaleas on it.

I picked it up and turned it over.

"Love your life like you love the azaleas."

That's all it said. She hadn't signed her name or left an address.

She hadn't even said good-bye. I remembered then that she had told me that she didn't like her life. She had said, "I love my life." When I stared out the window again, the reflection that stared back, framed in azaleas, looked a little different.

# f\*\*king cowards

north america  
the home of the free  
invasion  
pervasion  
persuasion  
of the obvious of the 'there'  
the 'now'  
the 'free'

By Tiffany Chen

we thought we were free  
invincible

superman of nations  
the senior of the high school  
powerful being she was  
standing tall with arms outstretched

helping  
protecting  
while her hide remains supple  
soft  
vulnerable

and that animal

that monster

bin laden

his belief

character found in all stories

the devil?

who knows

an angel fallen

hanging his head

i wish

extremism  
difficult to bear  
buildings collapsing

the weight

the pressure

tears

streaming

streaking the faces lines down ash-covered every-  
thing  
tears

drowning themselves  
what is one to do?

cry and cry and cry

losing a loved one

daily

simple reality

simple

expectations

masses of bodies  
unidentifiable

masses of bodies

evacuating thinking dying living.

the tv speaks.

09-12-01

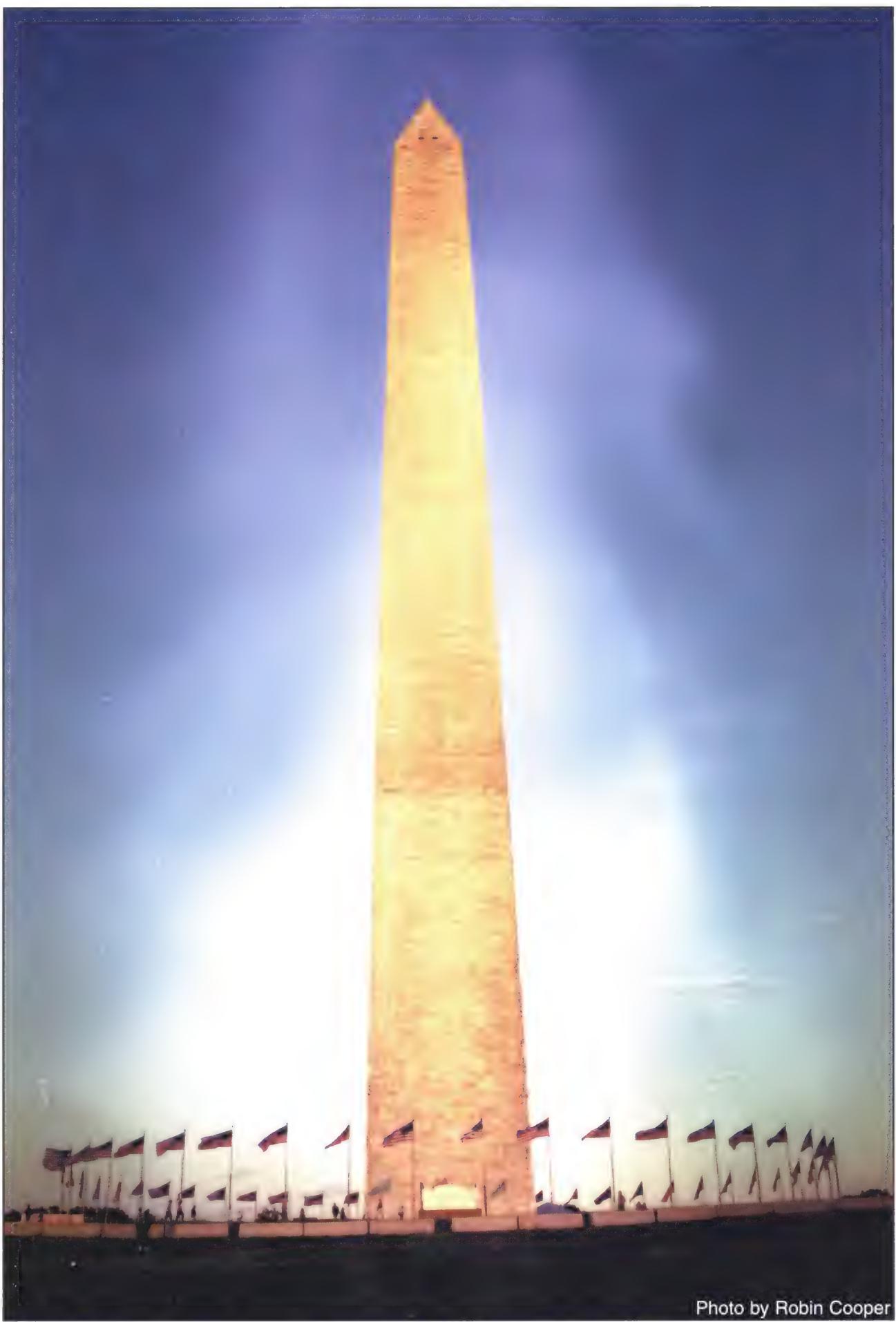


Photo by Robin Cooper

# The Life of a Father's Son

By Clint Wilson

The crescent of the stars reflected from the murky Mississippi with a harmless gleam. Sequoias sang to their lovers passionately while acorns dropped from the white oak trees. Anonymous birds weaved with guidance from their instincts to feed their young. Exploding. Air bubbles traveled to their only possible destination. In all of nature's perfection, two boys sat innocently on their family's dock- only one worrying about his father's life.

*A bite from a fish-* the boy's brain responded after the pole tugged his arm towards the water. Gasping from his disappointment of the fish escaping the entrapment of the hook, Charles lifted his bamboo pole and, without saying a word, walked towards the white swing that stood next to the over traveled dirt path. His brother followed quietly as he looked to the ground.

Charles sat down, his brown shoes covered with an extra layer of color from the Mississippi mud. He had turned thirteen and had just discovered what a tampon was. It disgusted him. Not angry at his father yet for giving him his red hair and ugly looks, he dreamed every night until two nights ago of sex with an older girl.

The little brother sat down next to him. A boy of eight, Charles knew he didn't grasp what they overheard only three days prior.

The swing sat the little brother down as it hit the back of his knees. He looked at Charles and asked, "Are we gonna be rich when daddy comes home?"

Charles stared straight ahead, "I don't know little

buddy- if dad's coming home."

Charles knew his family wasn't wealthy. He also knew the Ten Commandments, which he had just read in his dead mother's worn out Bible. He felt anxious, scared, but guiltily hopeful that his father would get the money so his family could be happy again. The last part of his father's plan resonated in his head.

"Well- what if the manager gets in the way?" Charles recalled his father asking.

Charles knew the unknown voice's response through cyclical interpretation, "Then we'll have to shoot him. If the cops come, we'll shoot them too. If the lady behind the counter moves her head in the slightest bit of a wrong direction, we'll shoot her too. We're gettin' the money- dead or alive."

Charles remembered peering around the threshold of the living room, seeing his father's face before he escorted his accomplice out of the kitchen door. It was a look of desperation, like the stare of a deer before it dies. A look he would never forget.

The swing rocked back and forth as the wind broke an eerie silence. The little brother talked over the breeze, "What do you mean that daddy's not coming home?"

"Listen," Charles explained. "Do you remember the other day, when we were hiding from dad in the living room? He's doing something bad with that guy he was with- really bad."

"He's just getting us some money. He'll be O.K." asserted the little brother.

They sat as an unbroken silence allowed time to pass. Innocent.

The breeze and the little brother's voice then subsided to the sound of a screeching car. Charles could see the headlights rotate as the car turned on the dirt road approaching his wooden house. The lights blinked through the long leafed pines and maple trees. He blinked in succession, dazed yet anticipating the sight of a wad of fresh green bills. The little brother jumped off the swing in a dead run. Charles followed him on the path towards their house.

The sight of his father's internal organs outside of his skin made Charles choke on the air that was intended for his next breath. A tall, mustached man prevented his father from falling and laid him on the couch beside the fireplace. Charles stood motionless, waiting on his usual orders to complete his chores. He felt his brother enter the room.

"Daddy!" he yelled, as he hurried toward him, "What's wrong?"

Disregarding the little brother's crying, the tall, mustached man grabbed the child by the shirt and dragged him towards the door.

"See if your dad starts breathing," the man said acting as if he didn't know that he was already dead. "Get some towels and clean up that mess." He took the little brother outside by his collar.

Charles leaned over his father's face. It looked white as the outside swing. He'd never seen his father's face that surprised before. It was a

look that history had documented from the most trusting rulers before they completely realized their betrayal. A look that Charles' mother had perfected when she caught her husband cheating. A gambler's statement of misfortune as bad luck f\*\*ks him in the a\*\*. Charles knew that his father didn't

## 'We're gettin' the money-dead or alive.'

die in the convenient store robbery.

Charles cleaned his father's wounds with paper towels from the kitchen. He attempted to place his mangled stomach and intestines back into his chest but as he did, the small intestine burst. Exploding. His hands returned back to his side.

Looking up and over his father's dead body and disregarding the smell, he saw through the window the mustached man walking out of the barn door. The man approached the house with a tempo as if he was walking away from a sin that he'd just created. The man veered suddenly and walked towards the getaway car.

"S\*\*t," Charles said as his father's gaze told him to hide.

He saw the tall man close the car door behind him with his right hand. The man lazily swung a shotgun in his left. He walked towards the house.

An empty cabinet that his little brother always relied on in hide-and seek was all that Charles could find to save himself. He

heard the front door open quietly.

The man spoke loudly, "Boy... Come here...your dad told me to give you his half of the money. He said for you to keep it in a safe place until he's better." After a slight silence, Charles heard the man mumble underneath his breath, "Where'd that little f\*\*ker go?"

Charles thought about his life. He wondered about his mom and why she took her father's unfaithfulness out on herself. He silently began to weep for his parents and himself. He wept for his little brother and his own future. Depression.

Contemplating suicide only for an instant, Charles remained hidden in the cabinet, the silhouette of the man crept past the only slot of vision that Charles possessed. He heard the back door close.

Charles' body perspired as minutes became half hours, and half hours became complete. He didn't care about his life anymore. Exploding. Charles rushed out of the cabinet and yelled, "Go ahead, and shoot me you f\*\*king a\*\*hole! You can't hurt me you ugly mother f\*\*cker!"

Nothing. Charles walked towards his dead father's body, looked out the window, and noticed that the getaway car was gone.

There he was. Innocently standing in the middle of his recently inherited, worthless house.



Photo by David Parker

## *The Auburn Circle*

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#### **RETRACTION**

An article published in the Spring 2001 issue of The Auburn Circle was incorrectly attributed.  
"Bring on the Cheesecake" was written by Katherine Jackson.  
We apologize for any inconvenience we may have caused.

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